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Union to Christ ..

UNION TO CHRIST.

"I am the vine, ye are the branches

BY

R. TAYLOR,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SHREWSBURY.

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Dedication.

TO THE

HONORABLE DANIEL BONTECOU

OF SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

Under whose hospitable roof the following discourse was first penned, by a student, then struggling up the steepest ascent of the "Hill of Science,"

IT IS NOW

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

It is now more than a year since the author's manuscript on *Union to Christ* was inspected by a judicious friend. In a note respecting it, he uses the following language, in reference to the "Method of Grace." "One of the earlier chapters of which," says he, "is on the same subject, and contains many of the same ideas."

That those "ideas" were not taken from that work, will be sufficiently evident when the writer observes that he had not at that time read that work, nor was he aware that it had a chapter on that subject.

Having his attention thus directed to it, a few thoughts and expressions have been taken from it, for which the usual credit is given.

May, 1846.

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INTRODUCTION.

Holy and intimate was the relation which man first sustained to his Maker. But his sin destroyed it. It cut asunder the bonds which bound them together.

The "Cherubims and the flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life," expressively declared that there was no longer any union between them.

Man, thus early, became an exile from God, and from that day to this he has not been able to approach him in the primitive way of holiness.

The breach between them was wide, and, so far as human wisdom could see, it was one that never could be healed.

Sin had placed him at an infinite distance from the Lord, and there, for aught he could see, he must remain.

There, while left to himself, he chose to remain. He had no disposition to return. He would hide himself from his Creator, and wander further and further from him. But God dealt with him in infinite mercy. He did not leave him to the way he had chosen. He made provisions for his return.

There was one most intimately united to the Father, who "was daily his delight." It was Christ.

They were one in essence, and equal in power and glory. Him, the Father gave for the redemption of man. He cast up a new and living way over that broad abyss that sin had made, so that, by a union with him, the redeemed of the Lord may pass over in safety.

They might thus be recovered from the ruins of the fall, and be reinstated in the favor of God.

It is this union of the believer to Christ that is contemplated in the following pages.

The candid reader of the New Testament will readily admit that there is some relation between them. It is the purpose of the writer to consider the nature, the necessity, and the perpetuity of this union, together with some of the evidence of it, and the benefits to be derived from it.

UNION TO CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE OF THE BELIEVER'S UNION TO CHRIST.

It may be well to prepare the way for the direct consideration of this part of the subject, by showing, in a few sentences, what this union is *not*. As a builder removes the rubbish before he lays the foundation of an edifice, so it is well to remove "false notions and misapprehensions" in relation to this doctrine before we treat of the true nature of it.

1. It is not of such a nature as constitutes the believer one, in essence, with Christ.

Were such a union possible it would make the creature "a partaker of the divine nature and perfections." Our existence is not swallowed up, or absorbed, in the divine existence when we are joined to Christ.

2. It is not such as to constitute them one, in person, with Christ.

Christians do not lose their personality when they are united to Christ, or because they are united to him.

3. It is not a mere union of affections such as binds intimate friends together. Christians sustain such a relation as that to Christ, but the one we are now contemplating implies something more than that.

That would be a mere moral union; this is mystical. That would only knit our affections to Christ; this unites our persons to him.

4. It is not simply a legal relation. There is such a relation as that between Christ and his people, by virtue of which he becomes their federal head, in the covenant of grace,

as Adam was in the covenant of works. He meets, in his own person, in the place of his people, what abundantly satisfies the claims which the law had on them, and thus frees them from its sentence of condemnation.

This federal relation is not the main one between Christ and his people. There is another relation, in the order of nature, prior to that, which may be called the foundation of it.

We must be united to Christ before he becomes our federal head. It is in virtue of that previous union to him that he becomes such to us. Hence, it is evident that the relation which believers sustain to Christ is something more than a legal one.

That, alone, would not secure us the benefits which Christ procured for his people.

5. It "is not a physical union," such as exists between the members of a natural body and the head.

Christ did indeed assume our nature into union with his person, "but it is the singular honor of that blessed and holy flesh of

Christ to be so united as to make one person with him."

6. It is not simply a mental union, or such as exists only in the conceptions of our own minds.

Unbelievers may censure the thought of any thing more than that, but believers know the reality of it, as Christ says: At that day ye shall *know* that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. (John 14: 20.)

All these relations may exist, but in order to share in the benefits purchased by the sufferings and death of Christ, we must have something more. There must be a union between us and him, which, though mysterious, is real, spiritual, intimate, and constituted by faith.

Such, in a word, is the nature of that union, which, according to the Scriptures, exists between Christ and his people. But to treat of this view of it a little more at length. It is,

1. A mystical relation. This cannot be

denied. The apostle Paul admits it. Having said, in his epistle to the Ephesians, (5 : 30,) We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, he adds, This is a *great mystery*. But if it was a mystery to the inspired apostle we must not expect to "comprehend the mode in which Christ dwells, by his Spirit, in the hearts of believers."

Partaking so much of that nature, many similitudes are employed in Scripture to illustrate it.

Some of them transcend it, as when our Lord likens it to the relation which exists between the persons of the Trinity. (John 17: 21, &c.) We can hardly suppose the relation of Christ to his people, in such cases equals that to which it is compared, for it is 'neither absolutely necessary nor self-existent, neither doth it constitute Christ and believers one individual substance.'

Other comparisons, which may help us to an understanding of it, are not equal to it. For example, it is compared to the relation

which exist between a king and his subjects. (Rev. 15 : 3, Matt. 25 : 34, &c.) But that relation falls short of the one we sustain to Christ. That is not spiritual. It is far less "close and permanent." But the Christian's union to Christ is such that he is spoken of as the head, and his people as the members of his mystical body. (Eph. 1 : 22. 1 Cor. 6 : 15.)

According to that view of it the head and some of the members are in heaven, while others are scattered about on earth. How that can be is a mystery to us. It is not easy or possible for us to comprehend it. But the fact seems well established.

Again, Christ is spoken of as being in the believer, "living in him," and "walking in him," while the believer is spoken of as dwelling in God, "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, eating his flesh and drinking his blood."

We cannot comprehend how these two states, so apparently contradictory, can exist at one and the same time.

Christ's living and walking in the believer seems to be directly opposed to the believer's dwelling in God, and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Both of these views are presented in Scripture, but we are not able to harmonize them with our views of things. They are points that are both too high for us and too deep. They make the Christian a mystery to the world, and a mystery to himself. Some have made this characteristic of the relation we are contemplating an objection to it, and it might be urged against it with great plausibility were it the only thing in the range of our knowledge which partakes of mystery. But we are encompassed with them. The union of three persons in the Trinity, of two natures in Christ, the relation which exists between our souls and our bodies, as well as the mode in which God exists and acts throughout the universe; these all partake in the highest degree of mystery. Yet we believe them, and many

things which are, in this respect, more or less like them.

Where the facts are clearly revealed, we must receive them on the divine testimony, though we cannot see how they are. We do so in relation to other things, we must in relation to our union with Christ. If we discard the belief of it because it is mysterious, we must for the same reason discard the belief of our own existence, and many other things which we unhesitatingly believe, not because they are a mystery, but because there are other sufficient reasons for our credence.

2. This union of which we speak is a reality.

It is not an "empty notion or cunningly devised fable." It is a most certain, blessed truth.

The Scriptures afford us ample evidence of this. Though mysterious, it is therein clearly revealed in the following, among other passages.

Our Saviour prays to the Father in relation to his apostles, and those who should believe on him through their word, "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John 17: 21, 23.)

Of him, says the apostle, that is, of God, are ye in Christ.

In these and similar passages of Scripture the doctrine of our union to Christ is clearly implied where it is not formally expressed.

And for that cause alone, we believe in the reality of it. We want no better reason for such a belief.

This single fact, were there nothing more, should be enough to secure our faith in it, though it were, if possible, involved in much more mystery than it is.

But the Scriptures afford us ample evidence of the reality of this relation also, in those figures and forms of expression by which the nature of it is unfolded.

One of these figures is that which the apostle Paul uses when he says, we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. It has been introduced before for another purpose, but it is here brought in again, to illustrate the point now in hand.

As there is a reality in the relation which the members of the body, the flesh and the bones sustain to the body and to the head, so there is in that union which Christ sustains to his people.

Another figure employed for the same purpose, is that of a foundation, or chief corner stone, to the building, fitly framed together, resting upon it.

The apostle Paul speaks of the Ephesian Christians, as built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

But as the relation which exists between the foundation and the building which rests upon it must be real, in order to give support to the building, so the comparison itself

teaches us to infer the reality of our union to Christ.

We may glance at one more comparison, which shows the same thing. It is the one so beautifully employed by our blessed Redeemer, the vine and the branches.

I am the vine, says he, ye are the branches.

But the relation which exists between the branch and the vine must be real, in order to support the vine, cause it to grow and yield fruit. Such, says Christ to his disciples, is the relation which exists between us.

Again, the communion of the saints with Christ, shows the reality of this relation. Truly, says the apostle John, (1 Epistle, 1 : 3,) Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The fellowship (*κοινωνία*) here contemplated is a partaking, sharing, or participating, in common, of an employment or enjoyment.

It is such a copartnership as indicates a joint interest in one and the same thing.

We are made partakers of Christ, (Heb. 3 : 14,) not simply of his benefits, but of Christ himself.

In the book of Psalms (45 : 7,) it is supposed the saints are intended by the fellows, companions, or consorts of Christ. This has reference not only to his taking upon himself our nature and bringing life and immortality to light, but to the graces of the Spirit, of which believers are partakers through him.

But this communion of the saints with Christ as much depends upon their union with him, as the life and properties of the vine, in the branch, depend upon the union of the one to the other.

There is no communication between them, in either case, unless they are really united.

The imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers, establishes still further the reality of their union to him.

Having no righteousness of their own, believers share in this "act of God's free

grace," only on account of the imputed righteousness of Christ.

If justified at all, it is "freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." But we do not share in the righteousness of Christ, unless it is imputed to us.

Imputation is the way in which his righteousness becomes ours. This is evident from what the apostle says to the Romans, (4 : 23, 24.)

But, from what is elsewhere said, it is evident that the righteousness of Christ cannot be imputed to us unless we are so united to him as to become one with him. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus." (1. Cor. 1 : 30.) And it is only as we are in him that we are made partakers of his benefits. He does not communicate them to any others. There is no channel or medium by which they can flow to them. The union to Christ must be real in order to constitute such a medium.

Again. "The sympathy that exists be-

tween Christ and his people," shows the reality of their union to him.

It is a beautiful remark of a pious and learned writer, that "Christ and the saints smile and sigh together."

Though in his own human nature Christ suffers no more, since "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," as head of his mystical body, he participates in the sufferings that any member endures for him. 'He sensibly feels the sufferings of the feeblest and the most obscure member, though he is in heaven and they are upon earth.'

It was in this sense that he said to Saul, when persecuting the church, "Why persecutest thou me?"

He regarded what that bold persecutor did to his people, because they were his, as done to himself.

Such is the degree of sympathy between Christ and his people. But such a state of sympathy indicates a real union between them.

The reality of this union is also evident from the mode "in which the saints are to be raised up at the last day." It is said in the epistle to the Romans, that "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. 8: 11.)

It seems to be intimated here that the pious are not to be raised up as the wicked are, 'by the naked power of God, without them, but by virtue of Christ's resurrection as their head, who sends forth a vital quickening influence into their bodies, which are joined to him, as well as their souls.'

But if they are raised up by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, it is because that Spirit unites them to him, as the members of the mystical body, of which he is the head.

It is on account of this real union to him which believers have, that he is said to be in them and they in him, being partakers of him, and having him for their life.

It is difficult to conceive what foundation there could be for such divine expressions unless there is a real relation between Christ and his people.

Such is the substance of the evidence of the reality of this union.

3. The intimacy of this relation.

There is not only a real union between Christ and his people, but there is one that is in its nature intimate.

This view of our union to Christ is fully sustained by the illustrations of it which we find in the Scriptures.

"As it imports mutual knowledge, choosing, solemn self-dedication, and issues in mutual love, delight and interest, it is likened to the marriage union betwixt husband and wife."

Says the prophet Isaiah, (54 : 5,) when speaking of the enlargement of the church, For thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. This figure is

considerably enlarged upon in the Prophecy of Ezekiel, (16 : 8–14,) and in the Songs of Solomon, as it is generally supposed. It is frequently introduced in other parts of Scripture.

Christ is often spoken of as the bridegroom of his church. He acknowledges the relation. I will betroth thee unto me, says he, in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness. (Hos. 2 : 19, 20.)

On the other hand the church is spoken of as the bride, the Lamb's wife. (Rev. 21 : 9.)

And when God's ancient people wandered from him, he said to them, Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you. (Jer. 3 : 14.)

In these places, and others that are like them, the Spirit of the Lord introduces a relation so intimate that those who are joined in it are "no more twain but one flesh," to

illustrate that which exists between Christ and his people. They not only become the children of God, but the spouse of Christ. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," as those who are joined in marriage, are "one flesh."

As in the case of Boaz and Ruth, the marriage relation unites them so closely that, by virtue of it, she who was before poor, at once becomes rich. She who was before only a gleaner in the field, at once becomes the mistress of the harvest. She who before abode with the maidens, henceforth has a seat at the master's table.

So with those who are joined to Christ.

A union so intimate binds them together that those who were before poor become rich in him, yea those who before had nothing, are made, in Christ, to possess all things; those who before dwelt in the dust are made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* Intimate as the marriage

* See Harvey's Work's, p. 317.

relation is, it fails in several particulars to express the nature of that which binds the believer to Christ, but it serves to illustrate that one aspect of it which we are now contemplating. Through this union Christians receive all their "supporting, quickening, beautifying, fructifying influence," from above. Hence it is compared to the relation which exists between the root of a tree or a vine and the branches. (John 15 : 1–7. Rom. 11 : 17, &c. Col. 2 : 7.)

One of these figures is employed by our Lord himself, and the other by one of his inspired apostles.

What can be more intimate than these relations seem to be? They are not a union of different things, but of different parts of the same thing, in either case so intimately united together that the one lives in, or upon the other, each part possesses the same properties of life, they yield the same kind of fruit. The fibres and the pores of the one are only a continuation of those of

the other. So intimate is the union between the branch and the vine. No external bonds can form one like it. Yet equally intimate, and, in some respects, more intimate is the relation between Christ and his people.

As the life of the branch is derived from the vine by virtue of the union between them, so the new and spiritual life of every Christian, which is primarily in God the Father, comes to us through God the Son, by virtue of that union which we sustain to him.

The branch abides in the vine, so believers must abide in Christ, would they live and thrive and bring forth fruit. They have need to partake of his Spirit, without which they are none of his, (Rom. 8 : 9)—to have their wills swallowed up in his, and to exhibit more and more of that meekness of wisdom which was so characteristic of Christ when on earth.

But if any illustration can express the

intimacy of that union which believers sustain to Christ, more fully and perfectly than any other, it seems to be that of the members of the body to the head.

Since Christians are enlightened, governed, honored, and receive their spiritual nourishment and breath, through Christ, this relation which exists between the members of the human body and the head is employed to aid us in understanding that which saints sustain to Christ. The head and the members constitute but one natural body, so Christ and his people constitute but one spiritual body. It is not in either case a union of different bodies into one and the same body, but of different parts of the same thing, every one of which is in its place essential to the perfection of the whole and conductive to it.

In a word, this union is so intimate that life as it were touches life, and spirit, spirit.

"Husband and wife are not so near, soul and body are not so near as Christ and the believing soul are to each other."

4. The spirituality of this union.

It is illustrated by material figures to aid our conceptions of it, but we are not to regard the relation itself as of so gross a nature.

"There is an apparent union between Christ and all the members of the visible church, which is formed by their receiving common gifts and influences from him" while they profess to receive his truth and to engage in his service. There is too a "moral union, of mutual affections, between him and believers," but that, upon which the enjoyment of the benefits purchased by his sufferings and death depends, is spiritual.

It includes a "legal union between us, as ruined sinners, and Christ as our surety. The everlasting love of God and the covenant of grace are the bonds of it, and the placing of our sins to Christ's account, that his satisfaction might be placed to ours, in the eye of the law, is the effect of it."

'It also includes the personal union of

Christ to our nature, in order that he might meet the requirements which his legal union to us drew upon him. But all these would fail of securing us the great object for which Christ died unless, in addition to all other relations, we have a union to him which is spiritual.

It is the spiritual characteristic of this relation that clothes it with many of its peculiar difficulties, and leads some to reject it entirely as imaginary.

It differs from the ordinary relations of life, with which we are acquainted, and under the influence of our senses we are apt to think of it as material; or if we "study more refinement" we are apt to regard it as nothing more than the bonds which bind kindred spirits, on earth, together.

But it is of vital importance to keep in mind the spiritual nature of it, notwithstanding the similitudes by which it is illustrated for us.

Then if we take the figure of the vine

and the branches, which Christ himself uses, it shows that as there is a natural, intimate, vital union between them, so there is a spiritual, intimate, vital union between Christ and all true Christians—that as the vine and its branuhes have but one common principle of natural life, our Lord and his followers have but one common principle of spiritual life. One common purpose actuates them, as it does the leader and all the followers in any great secular enterprise. Or, to use another figure, as the head and all the members of the natural body, are actuated by one common principle of life, which makes it one, so the spirit of Christ dwells with all his people and makes them one with him. There is a common principle of spiritual life among them. This creates a oneness, not only between Christ and his people, but between the different members of the family of Christ, as the members of the body, though many, under the influence of the same soul, are one with the head and with each other.

By one spirit are we all baptized into one body, and have been all made to drink into one spirit. (1 Cor. 12: 13.)

There is one body and one spirit. (Eph. 4: 4.)

It is thus seen that it is in truth, and not simply by figure of speech, that Christ and his people are one.

The Spirit of Christ so dwells in them that they receive not simply his benefits, but Christ himself. They have him for their life, and are partakers of him. He lives in them, and they abide in him.

5. Our union to Christ is one of faith.

The Spirit is the principal bond of it, on the part of God. It must first "take hold of us before we can live in Christ." Still our union to him is not consummated till we have faith in him. The Spirit on the part of Christ, and faith on our part, are the "two ligaments by which we are knit" to him.

But this faith is not of ourselves. It is

the gift of God. It is not without his help that we can exercise it.

But when the Spirit "takes hold of us . . . we are enabled to exert that vital act of faith whereby we receive Christ."

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, (or "by faith applies to me,") even he shall live by me. (John 6 : 57.)

It is this divine gift, faith, that on our part seals our union to Christ, and renders it complete. He dwells in us by faith.

A union thus formed with Christ is entirely supernatural. We can no more form it ourselves than a branch can engraft itself into a vine. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. But when it is once formed it is the foundation of every "solid comfort both in life and in death." Whatever "troubles, wants or distresses," such may have, they will find sufficient support in that union which binds them to Christ, if they only live near him.

CHAPTER II.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS UNION.

THERE are some things which cannot be overrated. They cannot be estimated too highly. In their bearing upon the great leading objects with which they are connected they are all-important. Those objects could not be secured without them. And if we look at the subject now under contemplation in the true light in which it is connected with salvation and eternal life, it will evidently be one of those things.

We cannot estimate the importance of it, in that light, too highly. If we look at the expense at which the way was prepared for this union, it will be very natural to attach the greatest importance to it.

The Son of God leaves the glories of

heaven, he veils himself in flesh, he toils amidst poverty and want, he suffers and dies the most ignominious of all deaths, amid the hidings of his Father's face, in order to prepare the way for it. The scheme was devised in heaven. It meets with the approbation of the Father, on account of the love he bore to souls. The Son offers to undertake the work. The Father accepts the offer, and consents to lay upon him the mighty load of human woes.

The whole plan was one that angels desire to look into. It was one which we have no reason to think would ever have been adopted by divine wisdom unless the believer's union to Christ, for which it was to prepare the way, were a thing of infinite moment.

Such would be the conclusion which one would naturally draw who carefully considers the circumstances by which that union is rendered possible.

And every other correct view which it

were possible for him to take would serve to strengthen him more and more in the impressions which he thus receives.

The metaphors which the Scriptures make use of to help us to understand the nature of this union, show us the importance of it.

He is the life of his people. Because I live, says he, ye shall live also. (John 14 : 19.)

I am crucified, says the apostle Paul, (Gal. 2 : 20,) I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.

In the vision of the golden candlestick contained in the prophecy of Zechariah, (chap. 4,) the seven lamps attached to it were supplied with oil from "two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof." They emptied the oil out of themselves, through two golden pipes. So Christ, who is, a little before, called the Branch, imparts spiritual life to believers through their union to him.

After the arrangement had been made for supplying those lamps, in the vision, with oil, and while it existed to the exclusion of all others, we may say that those golden pipes were essential to that supply. If they were removed, or cut off, the lamps that were to be fed by them would go out, though the olive trees were still as rich in oil as before.

So the believers' more than golden union to Christ is essential in order for them to receive that constant supply of grace which they need.

It is only to those who are united to Christ that he says, because I live ye shall live also. (John 14: 15.) They live on account of their union to him.

Myriads of the human race, we have reason to apprehend, die eternally, but not one of those who are united to Christ by that spiritual union upon which we have before dwelt. And those who live, live not simply because Christ does, but by virtue of their union to him.

The others die solely for the want of this union, though Christ still lives and reigns.

So in that expression of the apostle Paul's, just quoted. Though crucified with Christ, he assures us that he lives, or rather, that Christ lives in him, and he lives by the faith of the Son of God.

But this mode of life could only be by virtue of his union to Christ.

Christ does not live in the multitude of the human race who are not united to him, neither do they live by the faith of the Son of God.

Hence, this union to Christ is essential to spiritual life in a much higher sense than that in which the two golden pipes, in the vision, were essential to the supply of the lamps with oil.

We can conceive of other arrangements that might have been made to supply them if that one had failed, but we cannot conceive of any other way than that of union to Christ, in which spiritual life could be

imparted to souls once dead in sin, or maintained in those souls after they had been made alive from the dead.

Hence, it is essential to life in the highest sense in which that word can be employed. There is no other way to obtain that spiritual life which is here intended.

It is the only foundation of well grounded hope. There is no other way of salvation. This is the only door, the only name, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4: 12.)

If that union were destroyed, after it had once been formed, and the soul had received a new and spiritual life by means of it, that life could not be maintained. It would have no medium through which it could receive those heavenly supplies which were needful to perpetuate it.

The live coal which grace had laid upon the altar of God, within our hearts, must go out—the gentle flame must expire. We

cannot devise any other way by which it can be kept burning. We have every reason to think that there is no other way. The importance which has been attached to our union with him is fully sustained by the apostle, when he speaks of Christ as the head, and believers as the members of his spiritual body. He clearly intimates that as a natural union of the head and members is essential to natural life, as nothing can be a substitute for it, so a spiritual union between Christ and his people, is essential to spiritual life. Nothing else can secure it, or preserve it.

If we separate the body from the head, in either case, the members must expire. They have no other source of life.

Whether then we look at Christ as the head of the body of which his followers are members, or as the foundation, on which his followers are built up as a spiritual edifice, the importance of this union to him is apparent.

If he is the foundation he is the only one upon which that edifice can rest. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1. Cor. 3 : 11.)

He is the chief corner-stone, elect, precious.

Now if the only foundation, which a building can have, be removed, whether it be a natural one or a spiritual one, the building as surely falls, as the body dies when separated from the head.

It has no longer any support, and according to one of the established laws of nature, a material building, so situated, must come down.

So must a spiritual one, according to the principles of grace. The brightest hopes which it is possible for one to cherish, must, in truth, come to nothing, just as soon as he ceases to be really, closely, spiritually united to Christ, by a genuine, evangelical faith. The sweet psalmist of Israel asks, If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do? And he of whom that sweet

psalmist was in many respects a striking type, says, without me, or as the margin is, severed from me ye can do nothing.

That there may be no want of evidence in relation to the point now before us, we may introduce one other figure, which, perhaps, shows the importance of it with as much distinctness as either of those which have been introduced for the same purpose.

It is our Saviour's figure of the vine and the branches, which will not be the less appropriate on this point, because it has been previously introduced to illustrate others. It is hoped it may not be the less interesting on that account, since it will tend directly to strengthen the view, which we have just taken, of the importance of our union to Christ.

What can the branch do without an intimate, inwrought connection with the vine? Can it bring forth fruit? Can it thrive? Can it live, without such a connection with the vine? Evidently none of these ends

can be secured unless they are really united.

The branch is nourished by the vine, but an apparent union is not enough to secure nourishment. There must be a reality in it, and without that, instead of growth or fruit, the dresser would soon find only a withered branch, fit for the flames.

It is so with the bond that unites believers to Christ.

They must be in him and abide in him, if they would live the life of faith, and yield fruit to the praise of God. If a man abide not in me, says our Lord, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son hath not life. (1 John 5 : 12.)

But the only way in which we can have the Son, or have an interest in him, is by a union to him. We have no natural claim

to such an interest. Such is the importance of our union to Christ.

It is the primary source of divine life. It is the only source of that life, and essential to it. Without it Christ will profit us nothing. The riches of redeeming love will never enrich us. The eternal blessings of redemption will never eternally bless us. The mansions which Christ went to prepare for those that love him we never shall inhabit. Of the waters of life we never shall drink. In the song of redeeming love in heaven we never shall share. The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will never possess our souls. It is the hinge upon which salvation turns.

Unless we are united to Christ, it had been infinitely better for us, whatever else we may be, or whatever else we may have, infinitely better for us if we had never been born.

Without it we may in one sense see heaven, but it will be as Dives saw Abraham,

"afar off." It will not be for us. It will not be nigh. As he was far removed from that happiness which Lazarus found in Abraham's bosom, so all who are not united to Christ by faith, will be far removed from the exalted privileges of heaven. All who live without this relation to him, and die without it, must be separated from all that is good and desirable, by a distance which they can never repass.

This union, then, is truly all-important. Those who are yet destitute of it should seek for it as such. Those who have once received spiritual life from Christ, by virtue of it, should guard with the utmost care against every thing which tends to mar it. They must suffer even by a partial separation from him, as the branch does that is partly separated from the vine, or the stream that is partly cut off from the fountain.

CHAPTER III.

THE PERPETUITY OF THIS UNION.

We have spoken of the importance of preserving this relation between Christ and the Christian when it was once formed, by guarding against every thing which tended to mar or destroy it. But this remark was not made because it was supposed that those who were once joined to the Lord, by faith, would ever be permanently separated from him.

Those who had every appearance of being united to Christ, as far as men can see, may be permanently separated from him. But appearance and reality are different things. True Christians might sever the bonds that bind them to Christ, and cease to be Christians, if they were the keepers of those bonds.

But as the whole scheme is divine, not human, the bonds of it are kept under the watchful eye of Him, who, by grace, joins us unto himself. We have reason to be unfeignedly grateful that we were not made the keepers of them.

Yet we have as much reason to guard against what is opposed to it, as if we were, lest God himself should give us up before that union was formed, or leave us to great and continued darkness after we were joined to the Lord.

As then this union is divinely preserved no less than divinely formed, we speak of it from the character of the being who unites us to himself, if for no other cause, as an eternal union.

We have spoken of the nature of it, but it seemed too much to regard it as eternal, in that sense, since some relations which once existed analogous to this have ceased. I refer to the case of those angels, who though once holy, kept not their first estate, and to

man, who was originally created in the image of God, but lost that image by means of sin. Since then two classes of perfectly holy beings have fallen, we can see nothing in the *nature* of that union which binds an imperfectly holy being to Christ, that necessarily keeps him from relapsing into a state of sin. A Christian is but partially sanctified, at the best, in this world.

If a natural branch may be cut off, there is nothing in the nature of an engrafted one, when but partially knit to the stem in which it is placed, that necessarily shields it from that liability.

If it is fostered with greater tenderness than the natural branch, and thus saved, while that was removed to make room for it, the cause of this difference, in the two cases, is something foreign from the nature of an engrafted branch. And so of our union to Christ. If perfectly holy beings could be brought under the influence of sin, and be alienated from God by it, we see nothing

in the *nature* of that relation which partially holy beings sustain to him, that necessarily causes them to persevere. The tendency of sin is every where the same. It is to separate those in whom it dwells from all fellowship with God, from all union with Christ, and to remove them further and further from holiness, and consequently from the happiness of heaven.

We do not find any thing in the nature of a believer's union to Christ, that is of itself a pledge of the perpetuity of it;—nothing that assures us that those who are once thus joined to the Lord, shall not be separated from him.

But leaving the *nature* of this union out of the question, we have so much evidence, of another character, upon this point, that we are prepared to say, there are few if any of the doctrines of the Bible more clearly established than the eternity of that relation which joins believers to Christ. That evidence is in part the positive testimony of

Scripture. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." But from a state of nature we become "in Christ," by our divine union to him.

There is an indissoluble connection between spiritual life, or holiness, and that relation which is essential to a new creature in Christ Jesus.

As a consequence of this, our union to him and our state of grace stand or fall together. Whatever establishes the certainty of eternal life, to those who are once in Christ, establishes, at the same time, and to the same degree, the perpetuity of our union to him. Viewing the subject in that light, the following passages of Scripture are a few of the many that clearly support us in the view of this relation, which we have now taken.

The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. Job, 17 : 9. Though he (that is, a good man) fall, he shall not be utterly

cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. Ps. 37: 24. "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Christ.

The apostle Peter speaks of the elect as those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, 1 Epistle 1: 5. They, that is the saints, "are preserved forever." Ps. 37: 28. The righteous "shall never be moved." Ps. 15: 5. The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Prov. 4: 18.

It would seem that nothing could be plainer than that the perseverance of the saints is here explicitly declared. They shall hold on their way. Though they fall they shall rise again. They shall not be utterly cast down.

They shall be kept, not by any thing in the nature of their union to Christ, but by the power of God through faith. They are

thus preserved for ever, or in other words their union to Christ is for ever maintained, by the power of God, through faith.

But further, the promise of God in the covenant of grace seems to put this matter beyond a doubt.

Speaking by the prophet Jeremiah, (32: 40,) he says, I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. This was addressed at first to the captive Jews, but it is to be taken as a promise of the evangelical covenant, generally. Consequently it is applicable to all who are united to Christ. It discovers the purpose of God to maintain his cause in the hearts of his people, or to maintain the relation which subsists between them and Christ. He will make or "cut out with them a covenant of perpetuity," that he will never cease to follow them with his favor, while he implanted a holy fear or

reverence of him in their hearts, which should "rivet them to Christ and keep them close to him for ever."

Such is the purpose of God; and his counsel shall stand; he will do all his pleasure.

He will graciously carry out his purpose by the continued exercise of his power, by the continued intercession of his Son, and the continued efficacy of his spirit.

True, the enemies of holiness will leave no means untried by which they may hope to achieve the final and complete overthrow of the saints. As this precious relation which they sustain to Christ is the point upon which their salvation turns, the most vigorous efforts of their enemies may be employed to separate them from him.

If they were left to resist these efforts alone, they would undoubtedly be vanquished. They have no might of themselves. Standing alone, in their very best estate they are but a bundle of weakness.

But it is when they feel their weakness,

when they look to heaven for aid, that the cheering truth which has sustained many a sinking heart applies to them. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Ps. 46: 1.

They may have feared before, but the word of God removes from them all grounds to fear that their enemies will ultimately prevail.

I give unto them, says Christ, eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. John 10: 28–30. Many may try to do it, but they are not able. The purpose and the power of God secure the perpetuity of the saints' union to Christ.

It is also secured by the intercession of the Son.

He was pointed out by the prophet Isaiah (53: 12) as one that made intercession for the transgressors.

He is spoken of in the epistle to the He-

brews (7 : 25) as able to save them, to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. He lives, he ever lives, it would seem, for this purpose. Having once loved his own, he loves them unto the end. We have no reason to fear that he will ever be weary of interceding for those who are once united to him.

The benevolence that led him to undertake for them when far from the covenant of promise, leaves us no grounds to fear that he will ever grow weary of interceding for those who are brought nigh to him once by grace. He will continue to intercede for them. The Father will hear him. He always hears him. His intercessions will prevail; they will secure the perpetuity of the Christian's union to Christ. It will be eternal. It is rendered eternal also by the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. The divine seed, or principle of grace, remains in those who have once been renewed. (1 John 3 : 9.)

The time will never come when it can,

in truth, be said of such that they are in an unrenewed state, any more than it can be said that any are naturally unborn who have passed years in this world. Such persons may swoon, they may die, but that will not alter the matter of fact in relation to their birth. So grace may decline in the hearts of those who have been renewed by the Spirit of God. It may appear to expire, but it still remains an unalterable truth that they are in a renewed state. "His seed remaineth in him."

It may be buried, and for a time cease to exert any visible influence, but the principle is still there. It is not extinguished. This principle restrains them, so that they do not sin by the full consent of their wills, as they would otherwise do; or if they fall under the power of sin for a time, it will sooner or later effectually recover them. It will bring them back to God.

It does not allow them to continue in a course of willing obedience to sin.

We have thus not only the fact that those who are once spiritually united to Christ by faith, are eternally united to him, but we have the way in which that union is rendered eternal.

There may be, and there too often is, a temporary apostacy from Christ, in the case of true Christians; but while there is such a threefold cord, divinely wrought, that binds them to Christ, they have the strongest possible assurance that it will be only temporary, that saints cannot fall totally away, that their union to Christ cannot, consistently with the divine purpose, ever be dissolved. It is so guarded and secured on every side from which danger may be apprehended, that all who have evidence that they are in Christ, may adopt as their own the language of the apostle when writing to the Romans, (8 : 35–39,) "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in

all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us; for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How precious the truth, that there is an "everlasting tie betwixt Christ and the believer"—a tie that death itself cannot dissolve. It may break all others, it may separate husband and wife, friend and friend, yea, even soul and body, but that which binds the Christian to his Redeemer, it cannot reach. The Christian not only lives in Christ; he dies in him, and sleeps in him, till God brings them with him to the mansions prepared for them.

The believer is never more closely united to Christ, than when his body moulders in the dust of the earth.

Others may oppose this view of our union

to Christ, as much as they will; they may derive as much comfort from such opposition as they can; but deprive us of it, and of the glorious doctrines that cluster around it and diverge from it, and you deprive us of the sheet-anchor of our hope. All is henceforth uncertain, even to the child of God.

Deprive us of it, and you may proclaim that sinners all over the earth are flocking, in countless numbers, to the Lord; but whether to rejoice, angels know not, nor could we know any further than that we saw them gathered home to heaven. The glory of Christ, which they might reflect to-day by their union to him, might be sullied to-morrow, by having those bonds that bound them to him, severed for ever. The joy of men and angels that did rejoice might all be premature.

But let us be assured that if we are once in Christ, we are ever there, by a union that will never be dissolved; and then just as we have evidence that we or that others are in

him, we may rejoice for ourselves and for them. Angels may then rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BENEFITS OF UNION WITH CHRIST.

THERE is often much benefit to be derived from a connection with the great; let us now see of what benefit it may be to us to be connected with the greatest of all.

It is often of much benefit to be connected with the wise; let us now see the advantages which we may hope for from a union so intimate and lasting with the wisest of all.

It is often of advantage to be connected in some way with the good; let us see then how great will be the advantage of a connection with the best of all.

By looking at the privileges and prospects

of those thus in Christ, in contrast with the condition of those who have no connection with him, we may see much benefit that is confidently to be hoped for from being joined unto the Lord.

And yet this much must be little, infinitely little, in comparison with what every Christian will experience when he reaches his final home, as the result of being joined to the Lord. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. Our vision, though spiritual, is not clear and penetrating enough to see it; our thoughts are not comprehensive enough to grasp it; neither have we words to utter it.

By nature we are not like Christ; we have not his spirit. But when he shall appear, those who are united to him will "be like him."

Without attempting therefore to specify all these benefits, a work which eternity will not be too long to unfold, we may see enough to be derived from it to impress our minds with the unspeakable importance of it.

Among these benefits, as the most important, we must place justification, and the peace that flows from it, sanctification, adoption, access to God in prayer, perseverance in holiness, and final, complete, eternal fruition in heaven.

1. As the immediate result of this union we are justified.

The state of nature is a state of condemnation. This is one of the plainest truths of the Scriptures. He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3: 18.)

As faith in Christ is the bond of our union to him, it distinguishes those in a state of nature from those in a state of grace. On the one side, all are under condemnation, because they do not believe. On the other, all who believe are not condemned. That is, they are justified. A state of justification is opposed to one of condemnation.

Those who are united to Christ are spo-

ken of as in him, and the apostle Paul assures us, that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

They *were* condemned with the world, but the sentence of condemnation under which they lay is removed, and they *are* justified. The faith of every believer, like that of Abraham, is counted to him for righteousness.

He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, says Christ, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.

There are many passages of Scripture that bear directly upon this subject, especially in the writings of the apostle Paul. It would be too much to quote them all here. The reader who would see more proof on this point is referred to the Acts of the Apostles, 13 : 39, Rom. 3 : 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, and to many other places, to which a reference Bible will readily conduct him.

This justification is all of grace, but it is

a grace that is bestowed upon those only who are united to Christ by faith; hence, believers partake of it by virtue of their union to him. As great then as is the privilege of being freed from the sentence of condemnation, and justified in the sight of God, so great is the benefit of that union to Christ without which there is no justification.

2. As a consequence of this union, and one of the leading benefits of it, we have peace with God.

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5 : 1.)

To them that have obtained like precious faith with us, grace and peace be multiplied. (2 Peter 1 : 1, 2.)

To be spiritually minded is life and peace. (Rom. 8 : 6.)

To be united to Christ is to love the law of God, and "great peace" have such. (Ps. 119 : 165.) This peace is the gift of God.

He has ordained peace for his people. But

as it is by virtue of their union to Christ that they become his, so it is on account of that relation that they obtain peace.

Here then we may say, that as great as is the privilege of being delivered from the state of those to whom there is no peace, who are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, so great is the privilege or the benefit of being united to Christ. There is no substantial peace without it. Any thing that may bear the name, is but as the temporary, dreaded calm, that precedes the gathering storm. It is not worthy of the name.

But with this union there is often great peace, peace that flows like a river, in this life, which is uninterrupted and eternal in the world to come.

The impenitent may not covet this peace much, or prize it much, while they have health, access to the various sources of worldly amusement, a prospect of long life, and blindness to their deplorable state as sinners.

While they are so situated, they may not think this heavenly peace worthy of much sacrifice.

But the views of those who are brought up under the light of the Gospel are generally greatly changed when they come to see themselves on the bed of death.

Many of them then lament their folly in the bitterest strains. "O for a moment's peace before I die," said one who had toiled, through a long life, to find peace in the things of the world. And the anguish of his soul, in the want of it, shook the couch on which he lay; but no moment of peace came. It was too late.

Multitudes earnestly desire it at such a time, who would not seek it through the divinely appointed way, while there was hope.

And all will prize it infinitely above every thing else, when they come to open their eyes upon eternal things.

3. Adoption into the spiritual family of God is another privilege of those who are united to Christ.

That it is a privilege or a benefit, none can doubt who seriously contemplate the condition in which they naturally are, in contrast with that into which this grace brings them.

As the word adoption appears to have been borrowed from the civil law, we may refer for a moment, for the sake of illustration, to the custom of adopting as it has prevailed among men.

It has been common, both in ancient and modern times, for those who had no children of their own, to take one of another family into their own, to regard it, as near as possible, as their own, and to give it the rights and privileges that belong to a child.

Sometimes those who had children did it. This was adopting them.

Now we can scarcely conceive of a greater privilege that could be conferred upon a child that was poor, and parentless, and homeless, than to be adopted into a family that was able and willing to instruct him

and to provide for him as they would for one of their own. It was a privilege greatly to be coveted by the poor. But in every view we can take of it, those receive an infinitely greater favor who are taken from the unregenerate children of men, and adopted into the family of God.

By an act of God's free grace, on account of the relation which they sustain to his only Son, Jesus Christ, they are "received into the number of his children, have his name put upon them, the spirit of his Son given to them, are under his fatherly care and dispensations, are admitted to all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God, are made heirs of all the promises, and fellow-heirs with Christ in glory."

Such is adoption, or the benefits which the Scriptures show that those have who are adopted into the family of God. But as those only are adopted who are united to Christ, it is obvious that all the children of God partake of these benefits, solely because they are united to Christ, his eternal Son.

As many as received him, to them gave he power, right or privilege, according to the margin, to become the sons of God. (John 1 : 12.)

Christ is the adopting vine, into whom those who were, by their connection with Adam, degenerate plants of a strange vine, are spiritually engrafted, and become the sons of God by grace.

Contrary to the analogy of nature, they partake of the characteristics of the vine into which they are engrafted, instead of maintaining their own and giving it to the fruit they bear.

4. Sanctification is another benefit of union to Christ.

There is in Christ a fullness of grace.

It is the fullness of a living fountain, which is not exhausted, how much soever may be drawn from it.

It may always send forth its healing waters, and yet always be full.

Union to Christ brings us to that fountain.

It opens between us and him a channel of communication, by means of which the restoring streams of salvation flow into our polluted souls, to cleanse them, in the end, from all the defilements of sin.

Believers are thus assimilated to Christ, who, of God, is made unto them sanctification.

5. By means of their union to Christ, believers have access to God in prayer.

The person that is not united to Christ has no way to a throne of grace. There is no other way in which he can cross that immense moral distance which separates the impenitent soul from God, than to seek that union with Christ which we have been contemplating.

We believe that there is no other way in which prayer can find its way up to a mercy-seat above, or blessings descend from the Father of lights to us below. But united to him in the eternal covenant of redemption, there is a way at once opened in which the

prayer of the feeblest saint can ascend to a throne of grace—a way in which copious blessings, both spiritual and temporal, can come down to us.

6. This union is the foundation of every well-grounded hope. There are, indeed, many other hopes in this world that have a reference to the life to come. We find all manner of hopes, and hopes resting upon all manner of foundations. We may say that the world is full of them, but all others are doomed to disappointment. None will endure the great day of trial but that which is based upon our union to Christ by faith. This is their only title to the benefits which he purchased. They have no claim to any of them on any other ground.

It is this that gives them a place upon the chief corner-stone, where they may safely stand, undismayed, when all things else fail.

On the precious truth that they are in Christ and that he is in them, "the hope of

glory," and on this truth alone, they may build their hopes, and look up to heaven with unshaken confidence that their home is there.

7. This union is the ground of the believer's perseverance in holiness.

It is by reason of "their inseparable union to Christ" that true believers "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." They are thus "confirmed, unto the end, that they may be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1 Cor. 1 : 8.)

Because I live, says Christ to all who are united to him, ye shall live also.

As long as believers are united to Christ, their spiritual life is maintained.

But why should we specify the benefits which result from this union? It makes Christ and all his purchase the believer's, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's." (1 Cor. 3 : 22, 23.)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (Jam. 1: 17.) But if we inquire for the medium through which they come down, so as to be good and perfect to those who receive them, we apprehend the answer must be, their union to Christ. Others may share in those gifts from heaven which are in themselves good and perfect, but unless they are united to Christ, and receive them through him, these good things will not be ultimate blessings to them. But not to enlarge on this point, the benefits of union to Christ are such that every thing, with each one of us, is depending upon it.

We cannot sustain this relation to Christ without having all that is essential to salvation; we cannot want it without wanting the one thing needful.

United to him we stand approved and saved.

Separated from him we are without spiritual life, condemned and lost.

Through it comes every spiritual good, our comfort in life, our support in death, our final, complete, and eternal fruition in heaven.

All things are the believer's, because the believer is Christ's.

CHAPTER V.

THE EVIDENCES OF UNION TO CHRIST.

We have seen that this relation is one of vital importance, or essential to salvation.

It is but reasonable to suppose that all who view it in that light, will be eager to know whether they are personally joined to the Lord.

With the humble hope of aiding such, it is here proposed to present a brief outline of the evidences of this union, that by a careful application of it to ourselves, we may be helped to determine whether we are united to the Lord by faith or not.

A brief outline is all that can be attempted, for the doctrine that has been discussed occupies so important a place in the work

of salvation, that to present the evidences of it fully would be to introduce most of the points that indicate a state of grace. But it does not come within my plan to attempt that here. It will be sufficient for my present purpose to present a few of those evidences which are naturally suggested by those figures, borrowed from the Scriptures, which have been introduced for the purpose of illustrating the reality, the nature, and the necessity of this relation.

1. Spiritual fruit is a clear evidence that those who bear it are united to Christ.

This relation, wherever it exists, is a *fruitful one.* Fruit, abundant fruit to the praise and glory of divine grace, is the great object of it, in this world, as well as our salvation in the world to come.

"Christ is a fruitful root," and we are married to him, or engrafted into him, that "we should bring forth fruit unto God.' (Rom. 7 : 4.)

Christ says, as the branch cannot bear

fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. (John 15 : 4, 5.)

He is not only a "fruitful root," but he "makes all the branches that live in him fruitful too."

We cannot ask for clearer proof that the branch abides in the vine, than to see it yielding fruit, especially if the clusters of it are rich and abundant.

Other things may indicate it, but this proves it beyond controversy.

So of our union to Christ. He says we cannot bear fruit except we abide in him, while those who abide in him and he in them, do bear fruit. In other words, if they bear the fruits of the Spirit, they are in Christ. The fruit which they yield is a proof of it. We can want no better.

We may scrutinize what we regard as the fruits of the Spirit as closely as possible. We ought to do it, lest we mistake the bitter

grapes of Sodom for the rich clusters of Eshcol; but where we find evidence that one yields the legitimate fruits of the Spirit, we have proof of union to Christ.

We cannot bring forth such fruit in a state of separation from him. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." (Gal. v. 22, 23.)

Wherever such a cluster is found, whether it be in the incipient stages of its growth, or near maturity, there is a real, intimate, spiritual, eternal union of that soul to Christ. A want of such fruit indicates a want of this union. It should be so regarded by all.

2. Love for Christ is an evidence of our union to him. It is no ordinary love that we here contemplate. It should be such as will lead us, if need be, to lay down our lives for his sake. He laid down his for us, and he says we ought to lay down ours for the brethren. Much more we ought to for the Master if he requires it. As in nature

the hand or arm instinctively exposes itself to save the head, so should our love for Christ lead us to expose ourselves for his cause. Christians are only the members of that body of which he is the head. It seems not too much to make this love the essence of piety. Christ evidently made it the criterion of it, in his interview with Peter, after his resurrection, when he openly restored that fallen disciple to his favor.

The only question which he put to him, as that upon which every thing depended, was "Lovest thou me?"

In other places the inspired penmen give it a peculiar prominence. It is not only reckoned among the fruits of the Spirit, but it is placed first among them.

It, at least, occupies so important a place in the work of grace that we are nothing without it, whatever else we have, or whatever else we are.

The apostle Paul takes this view of it where he treats of charity, (1 Cor. 13,) by

which he evidently means love to God in the first place, and then those subordinate degrees of love to which that gives rise. The existence of this love therefore, wherever it is found, is a proof of union to Christ.

This includes love for his word, love for his people, as such, aside from every other consideration, and love for his cause. Hence love for either of these objects serves the two-fold purpose, at the same time, and to the same degree, of proving our love to Christ and our indissoluble union to him. On the one hand this love for Christ will not be found where there is not a union to him, on the other it will be found where there is.

To the first, he is as a root out of dry ground, having no form, or comeliness, or beauty that they should desire him. To the other he is the chief among ten thousands, the one altogether lovely.

In proportion then as we find evidence that we have a love for Christ stronger than we have for any thing else—a love that

leads us to love all that bear his image, because they bear it—that leads us to love his cause and labor to promote it—to love his word to such a degree that we aim to obey it, have we evidence that we are united to Christ by bonds that will never be dissolved.

3. The possession of the Spirit of Christ is a clear indication of a union of the soul, that has it, to him.

As the vine and the branch possess the same properties of vegetable life, so do Christ and his people the same principle of spiritual life. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." In other words, if he has the spirit, the mind, the temper, the disposition, which so remarkably characterized the great Head and Founder of our holy religion, he is united to Christ by those ties which constitute him the Lord's.

4. Cheerful submission to the allotments of Providence indicates this union to Christ.

The language of our Redeemer, in the

most trying of all circumstances was, "Not my will, but thine be done." That was the spirit of Christ. His will was swallowed up in the will of the Father.

He himself says, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

If we are so united to him that we possess his spirit, we shall, in some measure be like him.

Hence in proportion as we find we are like him, in this respect, we find reason to think we are united to him.

CHAPTER VI.

INFERENCES FROM THE FOREGOING REMARKS UPON UNION TO CHRIST.

1. We may infer the moral dignity of all true Christians.

Some worldly situations naturally have an idea of dignity attached to them. They impart dignity to those who occupy them, and to those who are united to the occupants, whether by marriage or by blood. A prince has honor because he is connected to a royal father.

There is great dignity in the "angelic nature."

'Angels are the highest and the most honorable of all the creatures of God. They have the honor of beholding his face in glo-

ry.' But there is no honor conferred upon creatures, no not upon angels, equal to that which the believer derives from union to Christ.

Angels "are his chief and most honorable subjects," but saints are his own mystical members, and spouse.

Angels are appointed to serve them. They delight to do it.

Christ is their common head, but he is the head of saints in a sense different from that in which he is the head of angels. Of both he is the head of dominion, but of the former he is the head of "vital influence too."

'The great ones of this world might frown, should the humble Christian presume to approach them, but God sets the meanest subjects of his spiritual dominion before his face with delight.'

With him the Christian, however humble his sphere, is before the prime minister of any state, or the prince himself. The pulpit where his word is faithfully preached, how-

ever mean its structure, is to him above the throne, though set amidst the most precious gems.

The humble but sincere Christian may well prefer the sphere in which he is destined to move, to that of Gabriel before the throne of the Most High.

2. If believers are so intimately united to Christ, we infer that they ought to regard his cause as their own.

It is to be feared that many who profess to be united to Christ regard all they do for him or for his cause as lost. But all such persons lack correct views, if they do not lack the spirit of Christ, and union to him.

Christ himself has gone away from us into heaven, where he neither hungers or thirsts, or wants any more. But his members and his cause have yet many wants. In them he often hungers and thirsts, and has need to be taken in and warmed and fed.

And he regards what is done to them as

done to himself. And so what is done for his cause is done both for those who do it and for him.

When they extend, or beautify, or enrich the kingdom of the Redeemer, they extend and beautify and enrich a kingdom of which they themselves are heirs.

When they promote the interests of that kingdom they promote their own. So they ought ever to view it.

It would seem almost incredible that professed followers of Christ should be close and niggardly in relation to their brethren and the interests of Christ's kingdom on earth, if they really believe that what they do for these, Christ absolutely regards as done for himself. Every one should be as much knit to the cause of Christ as to Christ himself.

3. Those who are so closely united to Christ can never want any real good. They may want much which they naturally desire, much that appears to be good, but nothing that is for their real good.

They may want what would be good for others, but not what would be good for them. My God shall supply all your need. (Phil. 4 : 19.)

They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. (Ps. 34 : 10.)

There is no lack in our heavenly Father's house, and Christ will not suffer his own members to want while there is a fullness there.

"Every one naturally cares and provides for his own, especially for his own body." Though it may be hard for us to rest upon the divine promise when "necessities pinch" closely, yet all our desires and wants, though many and great, are before him, and our groanings are not hid from him. (Psalm 39 : 9.)

"We have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities." (Heb. 4 : 15.) He knows them and feels them. He hungers and thirsts, and is naked and imprisoned and persecuted with

those who are united to him. (Acts 9 : 4, Matt. 25 : 35.) He has the tenderest sympathy for them, and this will flow forth for the supply of all the wants of his people. Their cup will be full with that which is best adapted to their wants. It will often overflow.

While his enemies "have more than heart can wish," it cannot be supposed that he will starve those whom he loves as his own flesh.

4. We infer the obligations of Christians to abide in Christ.

Since he has graciously taken them from the wild olive tree, and engrafted them into the new and living vine, they ought to live in him and to walk in him.

Nothing should ever be allowed to come in, to separate them from Christ.

Cheerful, contented, happy, they should move quietly on in the sphere that grace has marked out for them.

5. Thus united to Christ the head, we infer that the whole body of Christ ought to

be united to one another in the closest possible manner.

'It is a great sin and full of danger' for the *wicked* even to wrong and persecute the church. In so doing they persecute Christ. But how much more aggravated the sin for the pious to persecute or injure, or not to harmonize one with another.

The whole body of Christ, by whatever name they are known, ought to see eye to eye. They ought to be so closely united to Christ and to one another that nothing could ever separate them.

The love that binds the members not only to the head, but to one another, should be such as "many waters cannot quench," neither the "floods drown."

O that God would hasten the day when the hearts of all his people would be filled and overflowing with such love. It is the first legitimate fruit of that spirit which unites to Christ.

The Lord grant unto every reader this

blessed union, and lead us constantly to a close and impartial examination of our hearts, till we have the most satisfactory evidence that we are no longer in the depths of sin, but delivered therefrom by a union to Christ, that is real, spiritual, intimate, eternal.

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